



CANADIAN ETHNIC MEDIA ASSOCIATION

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TO: Canada Media Fund
Mr. Stéphane Cardin
Ms. Nathalie Clermont
Re: Access to CMF program for ethnic TV media producers

Toronto, October 5, 2015

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am writing on behalf of Canadian Ethnic Media Association (CEMA) to urge you to adjust current criteria for independent producers who wish to apply for the Canadian Media Fund support (The Diverse Languages Program). The current criteria make it almost impossible for hundreds of active ethnic media producers to take advantage of this program.

Background:

CMF requires '*an unconditional commitment by the broadcaster providing the highest Eligible Licence Fee to broadcast the Television Component*' and sets '*Licence Fee Thresholds in the Diverse Languages Program*' at 10% of the Television Component's Eligible Costs.

These two criteria make it almost impossible for most ethnic media producers who offer their own content through Canada's ethnic media broadcasting (e.g. OMNI stations) to benefit from participation in your support programs.

There are two reasons for this:

Broadcasters (e.g. *OMNI TV*, owned by Rogers Communication Inc.) either barter or broker its air time to independent ethnic producers, who *de facto* control content shown during 'their' air-time. '*De facto*' because independent producers decide what to show in their programs and finance the production of it. However, broadcasters and not independent ethnic media producers with a valid contract with a broadcaster (*de facto* controllers of ethnic content) are viewed by CMF as an entity which should provide the commitment.

Ethnic TV media are going through a very difficult time due to falling advertisement revenues and most 'broadcasters' (e.g. *OMNI*) are also not in the position to commit any funds to productions of independent ethnic producers.

Example of more than 20 independent ethnic media producers who produce weekly program in ethnic language for Canada's largest ethnic broadcaster OMNI TV:

Each independent ethnic media producer has a contract (usually for one year) with Rogers (*OMNI*) to produce weekly shows (usually 30 minutes or 60 minutes in length).

The content of these shows is fully controlled by independent ethnic media producers. They decide what to put into their programs and when to air it. They finance the production. Part of revenues is generated by sale of advertisement time within each program (usually, 50% of permitted advertisement time is sold by the independent ethnic media producer and 50% is sold by Rogers.)

With advertisement revenues falling down dramatically, most of independent ethnic media producers are going through a very difficult time. E.g. the going rate for 15 sec ad spot in ethnic media rarely exceeds 100\$. With between 3 to 6 minutes of advertisement time, each week ethnic producers with shows at *OMNI* can generate maximum 1200-2400\$ of advertisement revenue weekly. In reality, most of us are not even making half of the 'maximum' listed above. In the situation, when the show needs to be filmed, produced, directed, edited and advertisements spots managed and accounted for, independent ethnic media producers actually do their important job without even making a minimal wage. (E.g. most of ethnic media producers at *OMNI* don't even have HST - which shows they are not making even 30 000\$ a year of income).


Independent ethnic media producers are unable to apply for support of CMF programs because they are not viewed as 'broadcasters' and *OMNI* is not in position to provide any funds required to support such applications.

Most independent ethnic media producers are so financially and economically constrained that they are unable to develop any other platforms where their shows can be offered (e.g. web) due to lack of available funds.

As a result, in the past years, we have seen many independent ethnic media producer going out of business. These economic circumstances put the future of ethnic broadcasting in Canada into jeopardy.

Proposed solution:

- To adjust the eligibility requirement so that it will enable independent ethnic media producers with a valid contract with a broadcaster and factual control over shows and air-time to apply for CMF programs (e.g. *The Diverse Languages Program*) on their own, without 'commitment' of the broadcaster.



- To allow independent ethnic media producers with a valid contract with a broadcaster and factual control over shows and air-time to cover 10% from their own sources to open up opportunity of funding from the CMF.

- To create grants for the creation of web-platforms and applications specifically for independent ethnic media producers with valid contracts with Canada's broadcasters.

!!! It is important to note that the envelopes presently provided by CMF should, in our view, ideally be commensurate of the growing multilingual, diverse population of Canada. We feel that there should be improvement in this regard.

We think that this is important that not only eligibility criteria should be adjusted to open access to CMF programs for independent ethnic media producers with a valid contract with a broadcaster, but that CMF would actively attempt to address the dire situation of ethnic broadcasting in Canada. Perhaps, it can be done through the creation of special support program which will provide grants and financing on long-term basis (perhaps, operational grants for the duration of the contract with broadcaster) - similar to funding given to CBC.

The Canadian Ethnic Media Association (*CEMA*) is a non-profit organization for professionals engaged in broadcast, web journalism, print and writing reflecting Canada's diversity. *CEMA* supports the principles of Canadian citizenship, multiculturalism and the right of free expression without ethnocentric bias.

We thank you for your consideration and are looking forward to further consultation with you in regard to the future of ethnic media broadcasting in Canada.

Sincerely,

Kiu Rezvanifar

President

Canadian Ethnic Media Association (CEMA)

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